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votion to his science of more than one mathematician temporarily to waver. Besides all this an able and enterprising committee of ladies had prepared for the ladies of the Congress a most attractive series of visits to the Colleges, of drives and teas in Cambridge and its environs, and of excursions to various points of interest that seemed to leave no moment without something tempting to do. Whether viewed from the social side or from the mathematical side, the Congress must be pronounced a complete success.

THE WORD "RADIAN."

By A. R. CRATHORNE, University of Illinois.

Few terms in elementary mathematics are of such recent origin that the time and place of their first introduction into the literature can be determined. The word "radian" seems to be an exception to this statement, however, for its history goes back some forty years only. One of the originators of the word is still living.

When the "R" volume of Murray's "New English Dictionary" appeared, it gave under the definition of "radian" the date 1879, and a reference to the *Treatise on Natural Philosophy*, by Thomson and Tait, from which one inferred that here was the first use of the word. The derivation was given as "radius+an." This statement in the dictionary called forth a letter to *Nature* (Vol. 83, p. 156) from Professor Thomas Muir of Cape Town, South Africa, who claimed to have used the term in his classes at St. Andrew's University as early as 1869. At that time he was hesitating between the three words "rad," "radial" and "radian" with leanings towards the monysyllable. In 1874 after discussing the matter with the late Professor James Thompson and with Alexander Ellis, he finally adopted the term "radian," considering it as a contraction of "radial angle."

In answer to the letter of Professor Muir, Mr. James Thomson, son of Professor James Thomson, wrote a letter to *Nature* (Vol. 83, p. 217), in which he pointed out that the word had been used in 1871 by his father, before the latter knew Dr. Muir, and that on June 5, 1873, the word was printed in the examination questions at Queen's College, Belfast. These questions were published in the college calendar.

Two more letters from Mr. Thomson and Dr. Muir on the subject appear in the same volume of *Nature*, pp. 459, 460, from which it is seen that the term "radian" was used independently for some years by Professor Muir and Professor James Thomson, but that the first printed word was in the above mentioned examination papers. Professor Muir also originated the physical term "therm" in 1870 (see *Nature*, Vol. I, p. 606).